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FOLLOWING REPEAT ISLAMABAD 4722 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4722

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: BHUTTO'S POLITICAL FORTUNES

SUMMARY: TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE NATIONAL ELECTIONS
AND THE NATION'S POLITICAL FABRIC REMAINS FRAGILE. BHUTTO'S
FORTUNES MOST RECENTLY TURNED AROUND ON APRIL 21ST WITH
THE IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THREE CITIES, AND THE LULL
HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY THE CONTINUATION OF DESULTORY
NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OPPOSITION.

AS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PNA SPUTTER ALONG, BHUTTO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 106866

HAS TWO OPTIONS. HE CAN SEIZE THE INITIATIVE AND MAKE
EVERY ATTEMPT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT LEADING TO NEW NATIONAL
ELECTIONS, OR HE CAN PLAY THE OPPOSITION ALONG AND HOPE
THE PASSAGE OF TIME WILL BRING NORMALCY TO THE COUNTRY.
UNDER THE FORMER OPTION, HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE
THE ELECTION RESULTS, BUT THIS WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT
THIS TIME WITH ARMY AND JUDICIARY SUPERVISION. HE WOULD
DEPEND ON HIS POLITICAL ACUMEN, CAMPAIGNING ABILITIES,
HIS CONTROL OF THE BUREAURACY AND POLITICAL SPLITS IN THE
OPPOSITION TO EMERGE VICTORIOUS.

IF HE FOLLOWS THE SECOND OPTION, A SETTLEMENT WITH THE PNA AND NEW ELECTIONS WOULD BE MUCH FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD AND ONLY USED AS A LAST POLITICAL PLOY. THIS STRATEGY HAS THE OBVIOUS DRAWBACK OF NOT BEING A LONG-TERM ANSWER. BASED ON BHUTTO'S PAST ACTIONS AND HIS INTEREST IN THE SHORT-TERM POLITICAL QUICK FIX, HOWEVER, WE THINK HE WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE EVERY APPEARANCE OF NEGOTIATING WITH THE OPPOSITION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DELAYING. IF HE DOES, PAKISTAN COULD FACE AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY WITH THE POLITICAL SITUATION VOLATILE AND THE ARMY REMAINING THE FINAL ARBITER.

1. TWO MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY SWEPT TO VICTORY IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS. DURING THOSE EIGHT WEEKS, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S POLITICAL FORTUNES HAVE FLUCTUATED CONSIDERABLY. POLITICAL OBSERVERS WERE TAKEN ABACK WHEN HIS POLITICAL STANDING PLUMMETED AFTER THE ELECTIONS, THEN EQUALLY SURPRISED BY HIS ABILITY TO SCRAMBLE BACK FROM THE BRINK OF DISASTER. HOWEVER, BHUTTO IS STILL DEEP IN THE WOODS, AND THE NATION'S FABRIC REMAINS FRAGILE. THE EVENTS IN LAHORE ON THE 6TH SUPPORT THE VIEW THAT THERE REMAINS A DEEPLY FELT FESTERING RESENTMENT AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER, HE RULES A SULLEN NATION, AND THAT THE POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS PRECARIOUS. CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 106866

2. THE RECENT TURN-AROUND IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION BEGAN APRIL 21ST. ON THAT DAY, IN THE FACE OF MASSIVE RIOTING AND DANGERS OF COMPLETE DISINTEGRATION OF PUBLIC ORDER, MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED IN THREE OF PAKISTAN'S MAJOR CITIES. THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE, TASTING VICTORY, WAS UNDOUBTEDLY SHOCKED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S MOVE AND THE EVIDENCE OF MILITARY SUPPORT FOR BHUTTO'S POSITION. THE OPPOSITION'S DECISION NOT IMMEDIATELY TO CHALLENGE MARTIAL LAW GAVE BHUTTO FURTHER BREATHING SPACE. THE COMPARATIVE LULL IN THE BHUTTO/PNA CONFRONTATION WAS STRENGTHENED BY THE DESULTORY NEGOTIATIONS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS.

3. ALTHOUGH BHUTTO IS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY ONCE AGAIN IN COMMAND, THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS TENUOUS AND UNSTABLE. ON ONE SIDE PAKISTAN HAS A PRIME MINISTER WHO NEEDS THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES TO REMAIN IN POWER. SUPPORTING HIS POSITION IS THE FACT THAT, DESPITE BLUNDERS AT ELECTION TIME, HE IS STILL A POLITICIAN OF COMMANDING ABILITY WHO IS MORE SAVVY AND ASTUTE THAN THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PNA LEADERS. HE ALSO SITS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHAIR AND HIS CONTROL OF THE LEVERS OF POWER, INCLUDING THE NATION'S ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS, CANNOT BE IGNORED. HE ALSO STILL HAS SOME POPULAR SUPPORT,

ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE ITS EXTENT. A FINAL POINT IN HIS FAVOR IS THE DIVISIVENESS IN THE PNA LEADERSHIP.

4. SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION SIDE OF THE EQUATION IS ONE CENTRAL FACT - THE EXISTENCE OF A DISCONTENTED POPULATION WHICH IS FOCUSING ITS GRIEVANCES ON THE PRIME MINISTER. HOW TO HARNESS THAT DISCONTENT AND CHANNEL IT INTO AREAS THAT WILL ACHIEVE THE DOWNFALL OF BHUTTO IS THE PROBLEM WHICH HAS TROUBLED THE OPPOSITION SINCE MARCH 7 AND TO WHICH IT HAS NOT YET FOUND A SATISFACTORY ANSWER.
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 106866

5. AS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PNA SPUTTER ALONG, BHUTTO HAS TWO OPTIONS AS HE CONSIDERS HOW TO DEFUSE THE EXPLOSIVE TENSION IN THE COUNTRY. HE COULD SEIZE THE INITIATIVE AND MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION LEADING TO NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. IF HE CHOOSES THIS ROAD, HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE ABOUT FOUR MONTHS DURING THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD TO PLAN HIS CAMPAIGN AND MAKE ALL EFFORTS POSSIBLE TO HELP ENSURE VICTORY FOR THE PPP. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IF NEW ELECTIONS ARE HELD THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD STAND BACK AND LET THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS TAKE ITS COURSE. HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO SUBVERT THE PROCESS TO INCREASE THE PPP'S CHANCES OF WINNING. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, LEARNING FROM THE PAST, HE WOULD TRY TO BE MORE SUBTLE AND SOPHISTICATED IN JUST HOW HE DOES INFLUENCE THE RESULTS. UNDER THIS SCENARIO, THE PM WOULD DEPEND ON DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE PNA LEADERSHIP, THE INCOMPETENCE OF SEVERAL OF THE LEADERS, AND HIS OWN POLITICAL ACUMEN AND PROVEN CAMPAIGNING TALENTS TO MAKE A COME-BACK AND EMERGE FROM NEW ELECTIONS WITH RENEWED LEGITIMACY AND A POPULAR MANDATE. HE WILL ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY ATTEMPT TO FASHION AN ELECTION PLATFORM MORE APPEALING TO THE ELECTORATE, PERHAPS CONTINUING HIS ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN AND MIXING IT WITH STRIDENT NATIONALISM. THE POSSIBILITY OF A SPLIT IN THE OPPOSITION WHEN IT CONTESTS THE ELECTIONS WOULD ALSO BE APPEARING TO THE PM.

6. THERE ARE SEVERAL DRAWBACK TO THIS APPROACH. ONE IS THAT NO MATTER HOW MASTERFULLY HE ATTEMPTS TO ORCHESTRATE NEW ELECTIONS THERE IS ALWAYS THE DANGER, IF THE PPP WINS, HE WILL EMERGE FROM THE ELECTIONS IN A POSITION SIMILAR TO THE ONE HE WAS IN ON MARCH 7 - FACING CHARGES OF RIGGING AND NON-ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESULTS BY THE OPPOSITION. THESE CHARGES WOULD BE FED BY POPULAR SUSPICION THAT SINCE HE RIGGED ONE ELECTION HE WOULD ATTEMPT TO RIG A SECOND. ONE COULD ARGUE THAT IF BHUTTO WON THE ELECTIONS, THIS WOULD BE
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 106866

THE INEVITABLE OUTCOME, ALTHOUGH THE CHARGES WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN IF BHUTTO COULD POINT TO AN ARMY AND JUDICIARY GUARANTEE OF THE ELECTION PROCESS. ALSO, WITH ACTIVE ARMY INVOLVEMENT IT WOULD BE MORE DIFFICULT TO MANIPULATE THE ELECTIONS, ALTHOUGH BHUTTO COULD INFLUENCE THE RESULTS ON THE MARGIN. HE CAN, THROUGH THE LOCAL BUREAUCRACY, HARASS OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, TAKE ADMINISTRATIVELY PUNATIVE MEASURES AGAINST THEM, AND USE THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND ITS RESOURCES GENERALLY TO SUPPORT THE PPP CAMPAIGN. ONE CAN QUESTION HOWEVER, THE

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TO AGREE ON A SETTLEMENT, EVEN IF THE PRIME MINISTER DOES WANT AN AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION. THERE ARE FORCES WITHIN THE OPPOSITION, GROUPED WE UNDERSTAND AROUND MUFTI MAHMUD, WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE PM. THERE ARE OTHERS, SUCH AS ASGHAR KHAN, WHO ARE INTENT ON REMOVING THE PM FROM OFFICE AND DO NOT TRUST HIM TO IMPLEMENT ANY AGREEMENT.

7. A SECOND OPTION FOR THE PM IS TO PLAY THE OPPOSITION ALONG, PRETEND TO BE INTERESTED IN TALKS, AND HOPE WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME THAT THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT WILL LOSE ITS STEAM, THE PEOPLE WILL TIRE OF AGITATION AND THE NATION WILL RETURN TO NORMAL. UNDER THIS OPTION, THE PM WILL TALK ABOUT HOW HE REALLY WANTS A SETTLEMENT WITH THE PNA (LATEST WORD PASSED BY THE PNA IS THAT HE HAS PROMISED MUFTI, ALTHOUGH NOT IN WRITING, THAT HE WILL HOLD NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS) BUT WILL NOT TAKE ANY STEPS THAT WILL LEAD HIM IRREVOCABLY IN THAT DIRECTION. HE WOULD ALSO TELL THE MILITARY THAT HE IS SINCERELY TRYING TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE OPPOSITION BUT IT IS UNCOOPERATIVE.

8. IF BHUTTO FOLLOWS THIS PLAN, A SETTLEMENT WITH THE PNA AND ELECTIONS WOULD BE MUCH FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD AND WOULD BE SOMETHING TO TURN TO ONLY AS A LAST POLITICAL CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 06 STATE 106866

PLOY. HE WOULD FIRST CONTINUE TO GO THROUGH HIS CHECKLIST OF POLITICAL DELAYING TACTICS AND ATTEMPT TO PUT TOGETHER NEW AND DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS TO KEEP THE OPPOSITION OFF BALANCE AND HIM IN POWER. A RECENT EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF SUCH TACTICS WAS THE USE OF PAKISTAN'S ISLAMIC BROTHERS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE. AT BHUTTO'S REQUEST, THE SAUDIES, LIBYANS, YASSIR ARAFAT AND THE UAE FOREIGN MINISTER HIQE ENCOURAGED THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, THE SAUDIS VIRTUALLY FORCED THE PNA TO NEGOTIATE BY ASSERTING THE TRUE MUSLIMS HAD AN OBLIGATION TO DISCUSS THEIR DIFFERENCES - A COMPELLING ARGUMENT FROM THE CITADEL OF ISLAM TO THE CLAIMANTS OF THE TRUE FAITH IN PAKISTAN. THE ARAB'S STATEMENTS OF INTEREST IN A SETTLEMENT WERE SPRINKLED WITH

WORDS OF SUPPORT FOR PAKISTAN AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

9. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF LOOKING FOR NEW AND EFFECTIVE TACTICS IS BHUTTO'S TURN IN THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA TO ANTI-AMERICANISM. WE BELIEVE BHUTTO DECIDED TO EMBARK ON HIS ANTI-AMERICAN CAMPAIGN TO DEFLECT HEAT FROM HIMSELF AND TO FOCUS PEOPLES' ATTENTION ELESWHERE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. WE THINK THE TACTIC HAS BEEN AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL. PAKISTANIS BELIEVE IN INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND THE GREAT MAJORITY ACCEPT AS GOSPEL THAT BIG POWERS ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE PAKISTAN'S POLITICAL DESTINY. ALTHOUGH MILITARY OFFICERS AND MANY OF OUR MIDDLE CLASS CONTACTS MAY NOT BELIEVE THE CHARGES - AND NUMEROUS PAKISTANI FRIENDS ARE TELLING US THEY KNOW THEY ARE NOT TRUE - THE CHARGE HAS FOUND A BELIEVING AUDIENCE AMONG THE GENERAL POPULATION. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS MAJORITY WILL FIND THE CONSPIRACY THEORY RELEVANT AS THEY STACK IT UP AGAINST THEIR GRIEVANCES AGAINST BHUTTO, IS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION.

10. THIS DELAYING STRATEGY HAS THE OBVIOUS DISADVANTAGE THAT IT IS NOT A LONG-TERM ANSWER. CONTINUAL MANEUVERING AGAINST A CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 07 STATE 106866

VACILLATING OPPOSITION CAN EXTEND BHUTTO'S INCUMBENCY MONTHS AND PERHAPS EVEN LONGER. YET IT DOES NOT AFFORD PAKISTAN A PERMANENT ANSWER, AND THE DAMAGE TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FABRIC WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE.

11. BASED ON BHUTTO'S PAST ACTIONS AND HIS INTEREST IN THE SHORT-TERM POLITICAL QUICK FIX AS OPPOSED TO LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS, WE THINK HE WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE EVERY APPEARANCE OF WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE OPPOSITION WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DELAYING. THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT AGREE TO HOLD NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WHEN HIS BACK WAS TO THE WALL AND HE SEEMED IN IMMEDIATE DANGER OF FALLING TWO WEEKS AGO. ONE CAN WELL ASK WHY SHOULD HE MAKE THE OFFER NOW. IF BHUTTO CONTINUES TO DELAY NEGOTIATIONS AND DRAWS ON HIS REPERTORY OF POLITICAL TRICKS, PAKISTAN WOULD WELL FACE AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY.

12. THE FINAL ARBITER REMAINS THE ARMY, BUT AS REPORTED EARLIER, THERE ARE STILL SUBSTANTIAL REASONS KEEPING THE MILITARY FROM MOVING AGAINST BHUTTO. (WE NOTE THAT IN LAHORE ON THE 7TH THE PUNJABI ARMY DID FIRE ON PUNJABIS AND KILLED SEVERAL. A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IS HOW LONG WILL THE ARMY CONTINUE TO BE WILLING TO DO SO.) HOWEVER, IT IS AN OPEN QUESTION HOW LONG THE MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE PRIME MINISTER EVEN IF THE POLITICAL SITUATION DOES NOT WORSEN. THE TIME MAY WELL

COME WHEN THE ARMY WILL DECIDE THAT CONTINUED ECONOMIC STAGNATION, POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY, EROSION OF ITS REPUTATION, CONCERN ABOUT DETRACTING FROM THEIR PRIMARY MISSION, AND THE NEED TO PROP UP THE PRIME MINISTER IS SO CONTRARY TO ITS OWN AND ITS PERCEPTION OF PAKISTAN'S INTERESTS IT WILL TAKE STEPS TO REMOVE HIM FROM POWER.

13. PAKISTAN THEREFORE FACES THE PROSPECT OF A
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 08 STATE 106866

CONTINUING STRUGGLE BETWEEN A SKILLFUL PRIME MINISTER WHO IS TENACIOUSLY CLINGING TO POWER AND A DISORGANIZED OPPOSITION ATTEMPTING TO FIND WAYS TO TAPE THE POPULAR DISCONTENT. TO PROVE IT IS NOT IMPOTENT, THE PNA WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE CALLING POEPL E INTO THE STREETS AS IT DID ON THE 6TH IN DEFIANCE OF MARTIAL LAW. THE GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY RESPOND WITH FORCE AND REIMPOSITION OF CURFEWS, THEREBY HIGHLIGHTING BHUTTO'S ABILITY TO RULE PAKISTAN BUT HIS INABILITY TO GOVERN. THE DENOUEMENT OF THE POLITICAL DRAMA COULD WELL BE LONG, DRAWN OUT AND INCREASINGLY DESTRUCTIVE FOR THE COUNTRY, OR IT COULD COME SUDDENTLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY WITH A MILITARY REASSESSMENT OF ITS POSITION.
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